

Cochlospermum palakondense (Bixaceae), a new species from the Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh, India

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Cochlospermum palakondense A.M. Reddy, C. Nagendra & K. Prasad *sp. nova* (Bixaceae) is described from the dry deciduous forests of the Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh, India. It is morphologically similar to *C. religiosum*, but differs from it by several characters, such as hairy vs. glabrous adaxial surface of mature leaves, rounded vs. acuminate to acute bract apices, elliptic vs. deltate or oblong staminal pore, densely white woolly vs. glabrous ovary, and white-tomentose vs. glabrous capsules. Based on direct threats to the species, its conservation status is assessed to be Critically Endangered.

The pantropical genus *Cochlospermum* (Bixaceae) includes 20 accepted species (https://powo.science.kew.org/results?f=species_f%2Caccepted_names&q=Cochlospermum, Goyder *et al.* 2023). *Cochlospermum religiosum*, the only native species to Asia and India known so far, generally grows in tropical and dry deciduous forests. It is also cultivated in SE Asia and Africa. The species in *Cochlospermum* can be distinguished from each other by the degree of division of the leaves, shape of the leaf lobes, stipule and flower size, anther size, shape of pore on anthers, colour of staminal filaments, and presence or absence of an indumentum (Poppendieck 1980).

Since 2015, we have continuously conducted field surveys and research on tree diversity in

the Palakonda Hills in the Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh, India, and collected specimens of many tree species from different elevations and slopes. In 2019, we encountered a peculiar species of buttercup tree (*Cochlospermum*) in the dry deciduous forest and tentatively identified it as *C. religiosum*, based on Pullaiah and Rani (1999) and Pullaiah and Rao (2002). Subsequently, we observed and collected the same species at flowering and fruiting stages from the same location in 2019 and 2023. After critical study of the collected specimens, types/original materials of related taxa, protologues and other relevant literature (Hooker 1872, Kurz 1877, Cooke 1908, Gamble 1915, Haines 1921, van Steenis 1949, Poppendieck 1980, Dassanayake